

FAMILY HISTORY

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN AND MARY GILES CROOK ... BY HAZEL CARLILE KNIGHT (GRAND-DAUGHTER)

The year was 1831 in "Merry Ol' England" when John Crook took his first breath of earthly life. Little did he realize what the future would hold for him. At the age of 16 he joined the "Mormon Church" and five years later arrived in Salt Lake City. It was perhaps by chance that he chose to travel to Utah with the William Giles family. It was less than a month after their arrival in Utah that he chose one of the Giles girls to be his companion for life. John and Mary were married in Provo on September 6, 1856 and in 1859 he began hauling logs and building a house in Heber. Families had agreed to remain behind in Provo until log cabins could be built and other preparations made for their coming. Tearfully, Mary stood by that April morning as she watched her husband start out toward Provo Canyon and a new life.

Winter and the forces of nature had played havoc with the road in many places and traveling was slow. In addition, several snowslides blocked the route, making the journey hazardous as well as exhausting.

John Crook wrote in his diary, "April 30, 1859 we camped at a snowslide in Provo Canyon that night. The next morning we pulled our wagons to pieces and carried them to the top of the snowslide which was about a quarter of a mile wide. Our May Day excursion consisted of traveling on up the canyon from the snowslide to William Wall's ranch, where we camped. The next day we crossed Daniels Creek on the ice. There were heavy drifts of snow behind the willows and bushes. We thought we were the first settlers to arrive in the valley that spring, but when we reached the present site of Heber we saw two teams plowing north of us." *Wm. Darwin Robert Broadhead.*

They made their first camp near a spring which was considered to be the best land in the valley. Since most men in the camp had come from Great Britain they named it London Springs. *City of Seattle*

Much of the land was covered with sagebrush, which proved very thick and hard to clear. Yet with a prayer in their hearts and a song of faith on their lips they cleared away the brush and planted not only seeds of new crops but also the seeds of new homes and a new valley for themselves and those they loved.

Work in the summer was all done by hand. Hey, wheat and other crops were cut with scythe and stored for the long winter months. Winter in Heber Valley was a test of faith and stamina. Snows and bitter, blowing winds came early and lasted long. In the high valley frosts were heavy in September and snows were on the ground in October. Spring sunshine rarely melted the earth's snow crust until late March or April, leaving only about five summer months to prepare for cold, ice and snow all over again.

The short days and long crisp winter nights were spent building furniture and making clothes. Plows had to be sharpened and harrows made ready for the sagebrush and soil. Their constant prayer was that the elements would be tempered so they could mature crops and sustain themselves and their families in the new country. During the long

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winter months they were isolated from the rest of the world except for an adventurous Christmas visitor or two.

John Crook proved to be a valuable asset to their new community. His many talents were utilized and enjoyed by the other settlers. In addition to being a counselor to the Bishop he also had special interest in genealogy, music and history. Thanks to his efforts we now have a record of the early history of the valley. John organized the first choir in Hæææ and directed it for many years. Many enjoyed listening to his fine voice as he sang at various programs. John also was instrumental in organizing and producing some of the dramatic activities of the valley. He as both officer and actor. For many years he reported and kept track of the weather conditions in the valley as well as serving with the county militia during times of trouble.

Grandpa shows farming as his vocation but also owned the first red sandstone quarries in the area. His grandchildren can recall what a lovely garden he had. the rows were very long and you could see him early in the morning out on his hands and knees weeding. He raised apples and cherries. Hazel and Emma remember how they used to steal an occasional apple from his trees.

For nearly 33 years after the death of his wife he knitted his own socks but would get his daughter Sarah Carille to "turn heavy white yarn". His granddaughters Emma and Hazel had to go to his home every two weeks and do the cleaning. They swept, scrubbed and did other household chores.

Mary, like good L.D.S. women supported and helped her husband, in fact the story is told the Grandpa "made the bullets and she shot them".

Their first home was a covered wagon box. Then they moved into an adobe two room house within the walls of the fort. Here their first child Sarah Elizabeth was born. She being the second child born in the valley. After leaving the fort they lived in a three room log house and later a red sandstone home which is still in use today. This was built from John's sandstone quarry five miles east of town.

Mary was often seen in the home of the sick and dying, helping and caring for their needs. She was active in Relief Society and served as a counselor in that organization.

Grandma loved good clothes. She always chose the best material, and was an excellent seamstress and her appearance was always neat and clean. It has been said she never would use a broken or cracked dish in her home. She was a very good housekeeper. She died September 5, 1888, at the age of 55, after laying several months in bed as a result of a stroke.

These two fine people left to the world seven children (two more died in Infancy) and a rich heritage. Although they were not known to express their gratitude and offer thanks for services rendered they taught their progenators the value of hard work and spiritualness and faith in God.